

Step UP Sermon Series
Part Three: “Changing a Culture”
Pastor Dale Campfield - September 19th, 2010

Intro:

Matt 28:19 *“Go and make disciples of all nations...”*

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow... which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Series Premise: It’s time to Step Up – to fulfill the CALL of GOD upon our lives.

Most of us have known Jesus Christ for years; some less, but most of us have known Him and had a relationship with Him for years. Through the years, though our hearts have been right and motives genuine, we seem to have “fallen asleep” as a church. The fact is, the time is short and the return of Christ is quickly coming upon us. It’s time to step it up as a church and make sure we’re doing everything we can to reach souls for the Kingdom of God, walking in the fullness of the Calling that is upon each of our lives. That’s what this sermon series is all about. Stepping Up and making it happen. Stop talking about it, stop learning it, stop dreaming about it, stop thinking everyone else is going to get it done and step up and do it!

What is the call of God upon our lives? Two Things...

The Great Commandment: To love God and others.

The Great Commission: To go into all the world making disciples.

That’s it. That’s the call of God that is on each of our lives.

KEY VERSES: 1 Cor. 11:1 *“Follow me as I follow Christ.”*

John 12:32 *“If I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.”*

Stepping Up Action Cards: Each congregational member will receive a “Stepping Up Action Card” for each day of the series. The Action Card will challenge and encourage them to step up in a very practical way. Each card will also have a scripture on it for encouragement.

Today, we’re going to talk about “Changing a Culture”

In the world today, there is a clash of two cultures. Godly vs. Ungodly How do we do battle to change the culture of the world we live in. How do we make headway into changing the culture of the world into a Godly place as opposed to the world changing the church into an Ungodly place? That seems to be happening amongst many churches. The churches of American have watered down the message to the degree that it pleases everyone. We’ve ignored the Truth of God’s Word to make sure we don’t offend someone who might here the message. We want to be all things to all people so that they will like us; as opposed to being all things to all people for the sake of winning them over to the cause of Jesus Christ.

Definition – What is culture?

A culture is a way of life of a group of people--the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one person and one generation to the next.

There are different cultures within different groups of humanity and these differences can be a source of diversity and strength or of prejudice and violence. It is often said that while the United States embraces a melting pot view of culture, Canada has chosen a multi-cultural route that encourages new comers to cherish and preserve their unique heritages. There is no end to the fighting that can go on over the strengths and weaknesses of these two viewpoints. Suffice it to say that there are differences and often we feel that our way is the best way and everyone else should embrace our wisdom.

The Culture of America

Do you ever wonder what all happens on an average day in the U.S.? According to American Way, two statisticians who have spent much time studying the matter have concluded that on a typical day in this country...

Every Day in America

- 5,962 couples marry and 2,986 divorce
- drunk drivers do \$18 million worth of damage
- 90 million cans of beer are consumed
- 2,740 teenagers get pregnant
- 63,288 cars crash killing 129 people
- Over 4,000 women have abortions

While driving the other day, we came across All Saints Catholic Church on Montgomery Road next to Moeller High School. They're yard is filled with white crosses representing the abortions that take place daily.

The Lord is slowly but steadily being expelled from every public venue. It started in the public schools, and has spread to public places, court houses, our coins, our pledge of allegiance, and on and on to the point where today we are fighting battles about what we can even say in the church! It is no longer just about the separation of church and state but rather the separation of America from the God Who founded her and has so blessed her!

- **It is illegal to display the 10 Commandments in a public place**
The Supreme Court says that it is against the law to display the 10 Commandments in a public place, [though their building displays them!] reasoning that if you display them people might ponder them and if so, they might obey them, and that would be a violation of the separation of church and state. We are doing just what Israel did. It is now the official position of our government that the 10 commandments are dangerous! Wouldn't want kids in school to see 'thou shalt not kill' because what if they obeyed it!
- **Praying in public schools is illegal**
It has been since 1963 when the Supreme Court ruled it to illegal.

In the April 1994 edition of Reader's Digest, an article by former Secretary of Education William Bennett entitled "What Really Ails America" had this to say....

"Today, much of society ridicules and mocks those who are serious about their faith. America's only respectable form of bigotry is bigotry against religious people. And the only reason for hatred of religion is that it forces us to confront matters many would prefer to ignore.

To a great extent our society has gotten what it wanted - A society without God. But what good has it done? Bennett goes on to say....

"Last year I compiled The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators, a statistical portrait of American behavioral trends of the past three decades. Among the findings: Since 1960, while the gross domestic product has nearly tripled, violent crime has increased at least 560 percent. Divorces have more than doubled. The percentage of children in single-parent homes has tripled. And by the end of the decade 40 percent of all American births and 80 percent of minority births will occur out of wedlock.

These are not good things to get used to.

- **The United States leads the industrialized world in murder, rape and violent crime.**
- **Our elementary-school students rank at or near the bottom in tests of math and science skills.**
- **Since 1960, average SAT scores in our high schools have dropped 75 points.**

In 1940, teachers identified the top problems in America's schools as: talking out of turn, chewing gum, making noise and running in the hall. In 1990, teachers listed drugs, alcohol, pregnancy, suicide, rape and assault.

Our culture today is like a "quick sand" of culture. I use the term quicksand because it has a scary connotation of being caught in something that I have no control over. Yet I have always heard that the best thing to do if your caught in it is to stay calm because all the flailing around we tend to do when we're scared just causes us to sink faster.

No Worries.... The culture of the church is here! However...

However, I'm not so sure that's necessarily good news right now. For the church in America seems to have its own set of problems. In fact, I'm not quite so sure that the problem is with America, but that the real problem is with the church – the body of Christ.

Look at this... There is a culture within a culture – a culture within the church that needs to be changed in America.

[The Culture of the Church in the United States](#)

The Culture of the Church in the United States

- **75% of all Christian marriages end in divorce**
- **Christians spend seven times as much time on entertainment as they do on spiritual activities.** (*this is according to the Barna group*)
- **75% of all graduates from Christian seminaries are mentally, emotionally and spiritually unable to stay in their chosen profession.**

The statistics about the high number of people who leave the ministry prematurely are staggering. According to Joseph Umidi of Regent University in Virginia Beach, some 75% of all graduates from Christian seminaries are mentally, emotionally and spiritually unable to stay in their chosen profession. According to Professor Umidi, those who do remain get by with a little help from their friends.

- **44% of born again adults and only 9% of born again teenagers are certain of the existence of absolute moral truth.**

According to the Barna Research Group, based in Oxnard, Calif among born-again Christians...

- **Born Again Christian tithing dropped from 14 percent to 6 percent in the last few years.**

According to The Schaffer Institute...

- **Every year more than 4000 churches close their doors compared to just over 1000 new church starts.**
- **Every 2.7 million Americans leave the church as hurting and wounded victims of some kind of abuse, disillusionment, or just plain neglect!**
- **The United States now ranks third (3rd) following China and India in the number of people who are not professing Christians;** in other words, the U.S. is becoming an ever increasing "un-reached people group."
- **Half of all churches in the US did not add any new members to their ranks in the last two years.**

Andy Stanley, Atlanta pastor said, "People don't go to church because they've been to church and they can't find what they're looking for."

Time magazine quoted a young adult saying: "It's not that our generation doesn't believe in God. We just don't believe in the church because they don't have the answers."

BUT.... I believe that it is possible to Change the Culture of the Church which will Change the Culture of America; which will happen through a small group of people – which the Bible calls a **REMNANT**. Historically throughout the Bible, God always used a remnant to fulfill His plans and change a culture. **If we change the Culture of the Church, we can change the Culture of America.**

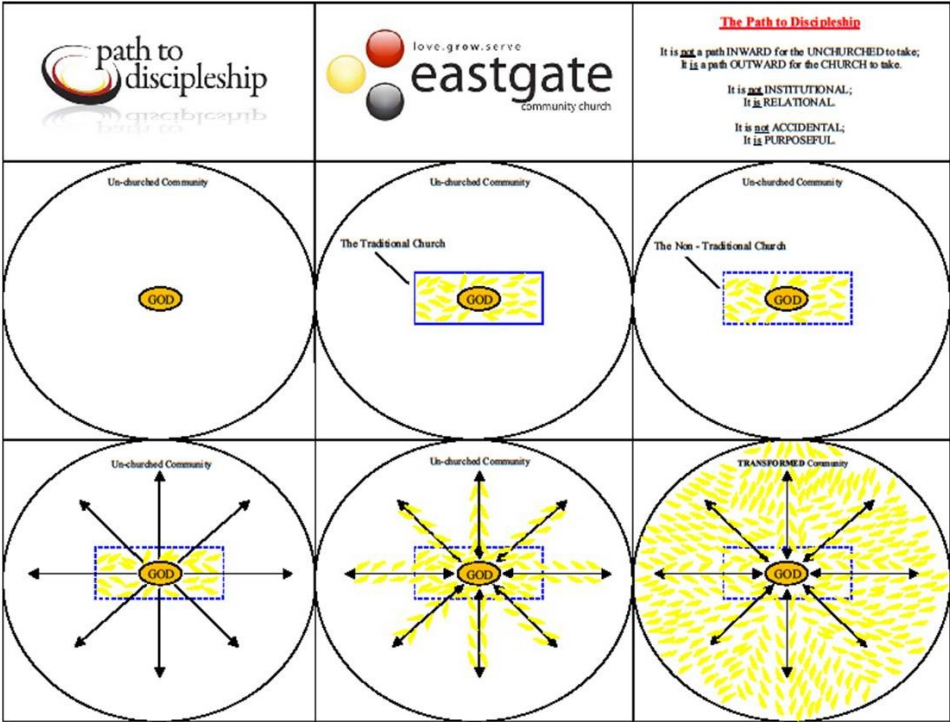
The stats say it takes 3-15% to change a culture...**many say 3-8%**...the gay rights movement appears to have done it with about 2%...

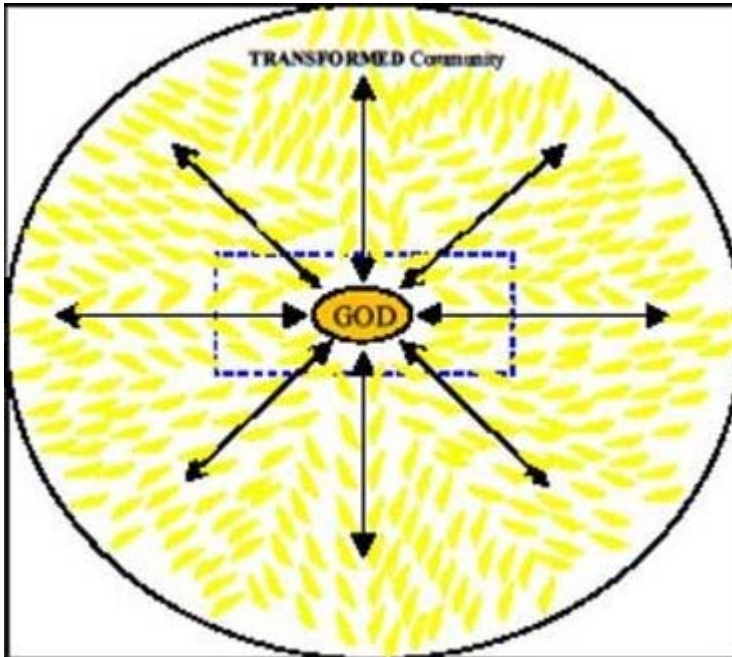
Illus: Etch a Sketch Culture

If the culture in which we live is an “etch a sketch” culture, we need to pray that God will shake it up. How will He shake it up? I believe it will be shaken by the church; the church knowing who they are in Christ, walking in the anointing, authority and humility given to them by God; speaking forth and acting out the love of Jesus Christ. **It won’t be shaken up by works, but by love. It won’t be shaken up by demands, but by love. It won’t be shaken up by rules and regulations, but by love. It won’t be shaken up by religion, but by love. LOVE IN ACTION!** Not just saying, “I love you”, but by showing the love of Christ in very practical ways.

Myself personally, I don’t want to necessarily be “culturally relevant” and adapt to the culture (though I do understand the fact that we need to be relevant to those we minister to) however, – I want to shake up my culture, and see if it can become more like Christ! I’m not satisfied to sit back and try to fit in to my culture in the world, but I’m ready to step up and make an **IMPACT** in the culture for Christ Jesus!

I believe as well if we will follow this model of the dream given to by God to Make Disciples, we can reach our community, our state, and our nation to Change a Culture...





Our culture is facing some very serious questions; questions that have been clouded with confusion and contradictions. THE CULTURE IS IN DESPERATE NEED OF A MORAL COMPASS THAT WILL PROVIDE LIFE CHANGING DIRECTION TO THESE DIFFICULT ISSUES. The body of Christ needs to be ready and step up!

remnant *n.* What remains after the removal or passing of the rest. A people set apart.

It's not the size of our remnant that counts...it's the quality of our remnant that God is looking at. I believe that there is a remnant in the world today that God is looking at the quality of the Remnant and their hearts with God. God's blessings upon any county is based upon the remnant of Christ followers. Not the size, but the quality and depth of that remnant. We can look at the power of the Remnant by looking at Sodom and Gomorrah. We can look at the power of the Remnant through the lives of Jothan and Phineous in the Old Testament. Phineous, a young man, upcoming judge, single handedly stopped the wrath of God by his killing the couple in sin. Jothan, a 25 year old King, had a heart for God even though the people did not; but God blessed the nation because of him.

[Examples of REMNANT's in the Bible](#)

The Remnant vs. The Midianites - Judges 7

Judges 7 – Gideon's Valiant Three Hundred vs. 135,000

Starting out with 32,000 men, God whittled them down to 300 by having the fearful leave and separating the dog lappers vs. hand lappers. The 300 were victorious.

The Remnant vs. Jericho - Joshua 6

SOME FACTS ABOUT JERICHO

1. About 10,000 plus people in the city.
2. Jericho was surrounded by two huge walls and many soldiers.
3. At every gate there were watchmen.
4. Two walls 15 ft apart.

The Remnant vs. Jeroboam - 2 Chronicles 13

Here, we find the people of Judah being ambushed by Jeroboam. The people of God, after realizing they were ambushed, picked up their trumpets, sounded the alarm, and gave a shout to the Lord. Over 500,000 people were killed that day; the greatest amount of casualties of a war ever recorded in the Bible.

The Remnant vs. Sodom and Gomorrah – Genesis 18

Of course we know the story, the remnant was not found, thus the city was destroyed. But God said, if there is a remnant, He'll save the city. Out of 1.5 million people, not even 10 could be found to be righteous.

I believe we've got more than that here this morning, that can stand save our nation, to step up and make an IMPACT for the Kingdom of God!

We need to Step Up and Change Our Culture. **So, what can ONE PERSON do?**

Let's look at Daniel in how he changed his culture...

The book of Daniel is very relevant to us in our day. Daniel is probably in his late teens or early twenties when he is taken from Jerusalem to Babylon. In the first six chapters, Daniel interprets the dreams of others. In the last six chapters, when Daniel is probably in his eighties, God gives him dreams of the future. We are going to go through the book of Daniel and let it speak to us today. It is very relevant to us in our day and we need to have a keen understanding of it and what God is saying to us in our day.

Daniel chapter one gives us a vivid picture of living in the world but being set apart for God's use. Daniel lived counter to culture and was blessed. In modern theological terminology, we call this living counter to culture sanctification. Sanctification is a work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit circumcises our hearts (Romans 2:29). Sanctification begins at new birth (John 3) and progresses throughout our lives. Sanctification is the road to progressive holiness.

If you look at...

Daniel 6:25-28 (New King James Version)

²⁵ Then King Darius wrote:

To all peoples, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth:

Peace be multiplied to you.

²⁶ I make a decree that in every dominion of my kingdom *men must* tremble and fear before the God of Daniel.

For He *is* the living God,
And steadfast forever;
His kingdom *is the one* which shall not be destroyed,
And His dominion *shall endure* to the end.

²⁷ He delivers and rescues,
And He works signs and wonders
In heaven and on earth,
Who has delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

²⁸ So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

How does this happen. How does this get written? What did Daniel do that brought the king to the place to make this declaration? That's what we'll look at this morning. We'll look at Daniels life and see what led up to him making an IMPACT in his community, to the point that the King was telling everyone that they had to serve his God; which is our God.

Here we go...

#1: He Refused to Defile Himself Daniel 1:8

⁸ But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's delicacies, nor with the wine which he drank; therefore he requested of the chief of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.

In Daniel chapter one, Babylon represents the world. Daniel and his three Hebrew friends are taken from Jerusalem to Babylon for training and for King Nebuchadnezzar's service. Modern day Babylon is located in Iraq.

King Nebuchadnezzar desired to make these four Hebrew children into citizens of Babylon. He begins by changing their names and sending them through a three year training course.

In the midst of it all, Daniel lives counter to culture and openly serves the God of Israel instead of the Gods of Babylon. In doing so Daniel shows us how we can live counter to culture and openly follow Jesus on our journey from earth to glory.

RESOLVE NOT TO DEFILE YOURSELF.

Look at it again, God's Word says (**Daniel 1:8** NIV) "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."

Daniel knew that a portion of all foods was offered to the Babylon Gods and a portion of all wine was poured out on the altars of the Babylon Gods. He also knew that eating the meat from the King's table would be against the Law of Moses. He resolved not to defile himself.

Daniel made a decision not to allow the culture of Babylon to diminish his relationship with God. He decided to live to please God and not the culture that surrounded him. He decided to live counter to culture.

Beloved, living counter to culture begins by making a choice to not let the world influence your walk with Jesus. It is choosing to make God's Word your authoritative guide for all of your beliefs and actions. God's Word is your instruction guide and the Holy Spirit is your partner. The Word and the Spirit will come together in your life to enable you to live counter to culture as you resolve not to defile yourself.

On top of that, DO NOT CONDEMN OTHERS FOR THEIR LIFESTYLE AND BELIEFS.

Again, God's Word says (**Daniel 1:8** NIV) "But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way."

Notice what Daniel does not do. He does not condemn this government official because his lifestyle is different or because his beliefs are different. Daniel politely asks permission to not participate.

We live in a world where we have religionists and even whole churches bashing gays, condemning pro choice people, promoting one political party over another and claiming it to be "God's party". They look down on those in poverty and proclaim to them that if they would just live right, God would prosper them. They snub their nose to those that are homeless and those that are battling addictions to drugs, alcohol, gambling and sex. To be accepted by these religionists and their churches, you have to believe like them, look like them and act like them. God help us! Daniel was not like that.

Jesus was not like that either. The religionist of Jesus' day brought a lady to Him that was caught in adultery. They were ready to stone her to death because of what she did. Jesus knelt down and wrote something in the sand and said that those without any sin should cast the first stone at this lady. One by one, the religionist left. When Jesus looked up, He only saw the lady standing there. Jesus did not condemn this lady.

Beloved, there are a lot of religionists in our day that talk a big game and they are quick to point out the sins of others and condemn them. That is not why we are left in the world. We are left in the world to be living testimonies of the power of God. You see, the most powerful testimony is the one lived, not the one spoken. The moment you made Jesus your Lord and Savior and you took up your cross to follow Him, you became a powerful testimony. You are not to condemn

others for their lifestyle and beliefs. Just live your life for Jesus and allow God's Word and the Holy Spirit to do a powerful work in you. Don't condemn others. Don't pick splinters out of another's eye. Just concentrate on getting every obstacle out of your eye so that you can keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. The life you live will speak for itself as you follow Jesus.

Let me encourage you to RELY UPON GOD'S WISDOM OVER YOUR OWN

And as you do this, GOD WILL GIVE YOU SUPERNATURAL HELP.

Daniel said (**Daniel 1:12-16** NIV) "Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. {13} Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see." {14} So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days. {15} At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food. {16} So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead."

Now there is no doubt, given current scientific and medical studies, that a vegetarian diet is much healthier than a diet high in meat. In fact if you study Genesis you will find out that we were created to eat vegetation. Man did not become meat eaters until after the fall. Is it any wonder that we are finding out today that a diet high in vegetation and low in fat is healthier for us? It's the way we were designed by our creator.

The diet that Daniel and his friends were on was a healthier diet, but there is no way they could see the results they saw in ten days without supernatural help. After all, they had just made a long journey from Jerusalem to Babylon. I read in one commentary that it was a 1000 mile journey. They had to have lost much weight on their journey. But yet they appeared healthy after just 10 days on a pure vegetarian diet. God gave them supernatural help.

Beloved, God has not left us without the help we need to live counter to our culture. He has given us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit provides us the supernatural help that we need. He empowers us to live victoriously in our day. He separates us from the world for God's use.

And then... GOD WILL GIVE YOU FAVOR.

God's Word says (**Daniel 1:17-21** NIV) "To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds. {18} At the end of the time set by the king to bring them in, the chief official presented them to Nebuchadnezzar. {19} The king talked with them, and he found none equal to Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah; so they entered the king's service. {20} In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom. {21} And Daniel remained there until the first year of King Cyrus."

God gave Daniel and his friends favor with man because they chose to live counter to culture without being condemning. Daniel successfully served in the king's service from the time he came to Babylon in his late teens or early twenties until he was in his eighties and serving King Cyrus.

He did not compromise his beliefs and actions. He did not condemn others. He lived his life for God and his life was a walking testimony of God's power. God gave him favor with man.

Friends, God will give you favor with man. Your relationships will blossom as you live counter to culture without condemning those around you. God will give you favor with people and you will make an impact for Him in your day just like Daniel did in his day.

Let me add these to the story...

#2: He Refused to Bow to Fear Daniel 3:16-18

¹⁶ Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego answered and said to the king, "O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷ If that *is the case*, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver *us* from your hand, O king. ¹⁸ But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up."

#3: He Refused to Compromise His Convictions Daniel 6:10

¹⁰ Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went home. And in his upper room, with his windows open toward Jerusalem, he knelt down on his knees three times that day, and prayed and gave thanks before his God, as was his custom since early days.

Be consistent in your spiritual practices and do not bow to fear.

When Daniel learned that the decree had been published he went home to his upstairs bedroom where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before. Daniel 6:10

In time Nebuchadnezzar was replaced by King Belshazzar and then King Belshazzar was replaced by King Darius. Daniel continued to occupy a place of honor with each changing administration... all the while continuing also to practice his Jewish faith. Under Darius' rule a group of the king's advisors encouraged the king to enact a law forbidding anyone from praying to any god or man other than the king. Anyone who violated that decree was to be thrown into the lion's den. Hence the story of Daniel and the Lion's Den...

In Daniel 6 we read that when Daniel learned of King Darius' decree, "he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to God, just as he had done before." Daniel 6:10

Daniel did not miss a beat when it came to the being consistent in his spiritual disciplines or practices. I am sure Daniel did not relish the thought of being thrown into a den of lions... but the threat of it did not keep him from observing his habit of praying three times a day.

His consistency in observing his spiritual practices resulted in God honoring him for his courage and King Darius enacting a second decree ordering that “everyone in his kingdom must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.” Daniel 6:26

Truett Cathy is the founder of Chick-fil-A restaurants. In addition to being a successful businessman he is better known and respected for letting his faith guide his business operation. His restaurants have been closed on Sunday since 1948 despite the fact that closing 1,000 outlets on Sunday costs him millions of dollars in lost revenue. In 1948 he hired a 12 year old African American... a very unpopular thing to do in that part of the country in 1948. Rather than put promotional toys in his kid’s meals he gives away Veggie Tale books or other character building materials. He has founded eleven foster homes and provides scholarships for kids and college students.

We need to be consistent in our spiritual practices. Our neighbors know if we are faithful in church attendance or not so much, depending on when the Bengals are playing. Our spouses and our children know if we read our bibles and pray. Our co-workers and classmates know if we are always honest and forthright or if we fudge the truth or slack off or call in sick when we aren’t or juggle figures or are hiding who and what we really are. Our neighbors know if we are kind and considerate neighbors. Our neighbors know if we are grumpy and mean spirited.

Conclusion:

It’s time for the church to STEP UP and Change our Culture. But first, it is time for the remnant within the church to STEP UP to change the church! Will you take on the challenge? Will you do whatever it takes to step up? It’s time! And as we do... you watch, you wait, you’ll see! Our nation will be transformed!